

Message Text

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13
ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 INT-05 /108 W

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R 210800Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9551

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 4535

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFRO, PORG, MO, SS, AG

SUBJECT: SAHARA AT THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED MEETING

REF: A) RABAT 4333, B) RABAT 4431

1. SUMMARY. MOROCCO SQUEEZED THROUGH AN AGITATED SERIES OF SAHARA DEBATES AT THE NAC IN FAIR SHAPE. ITS DIPLOMATS WORKED HARD AND WERE ABLE TO AT LEAST DEADLOCK THE ALGERIANS, BUT THE RESULTANT SAHARA WORDING OF THE SUMMIT'S DECLARATION WAS LESS THAN OPTIMUM. MEANWHILE ANTI-ALGERIAN PRESS PLAY HERE REACHED NEW HEIGHTS OF ACRIMONY. ALTHOUGH THE BALL IS TECHNICALLY BACK IN THE OAU COURT, THE NEXT DIPLOMATIC SETTING FOR THE SAHARA WILL PROBABLY BE THE UNGA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SAHARA WORDING: A COMPROMISE. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, THE MOROCCAN MEDIA ARE PLAYING THE NAC COLOMBO WORDING ON THE ZLHARA AS A MOROCCAN VICTORY AND AN ALGERIAN SETBACK. IN REALITY, THE RESULTING PARAGRAPH IN THE CONFERENCE DECLARATION, WHICH
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MAKES REFERENCE TO THE PENDING EXTRAORDINARY OAU SUMMIT, FELL

SHORT OF MOROCCAN HOPES. WHILE THE CONFERENCE MADE NO MENTION OF EITHER SELF-DETUZBL ATION OR THE SAHARAN PEOPLE, NEITHER DID IT MENTION THE ARAB LEAGUE, SOMETHING MOROCCO HAD HOPED FOR. AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY MOROCCO HAS BEEN LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE OAU FORUM (SEE RABAT 4270). IN FACT EARLY ON IN THE SESSION# 73"48,& - :9)9.79 .3358,& 9* -4-?)3-&73 43043 3,-8 353 , MOROCCO WAS REPORTED TO HAVE REJECTED A PROPOSAL BY SOME ARAB LEAGUE COUNTRIES TO RECOMMEND THAT THE COLOMBO SUMMIT DECLARATION REFER TO THE OAU DECISION. MOROCCO WAS REPORTED TO HAVE ARGUED THAT, SINCE IT WAS ABSENT FROM (I.E., BOYCOTTING) THE PORT LOUIS SUMMIT SESSION WHICH PASSED THE SAHARA RESOLUTION, IT COULD NOT SUBSCRIBE TO IT.

3. HOWEVER, PRACTICALITY REQUIRED THAT MOROCCO GIVE ON THIS POSITION AND THE PUBLIC POSTURE HERE APPEARS TO BE TO LEAN ON THE OAU SUMMIT CALL AGAIN, ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY TO SUBSCRIBE TO IT. PRIMIN OSMAN, IN HIS SUMMIT SPEECH, SET THE TONE BY STATING, "WE PREFER TO AWAIT THE RESULTS OF THE OAU'S EFFORTS....AS WELL AS THE PRAISEWORTHY EFFORTS OF THE ARAB LEAGUE TO ASSURE PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION."

4. HARSH ANTI-ALGERIAN PRESS PLAY. MEANWHILE, ANTI-ALGERIAN ACRIMONY IN THE LOCAL PRESS REACHED NEW HEIGHTS DURING THE CONFERENCE. BOUMEDIENE, WHOM AUTHORITATIVE LE MATIN PUBLISHER AT ONE POINT LIKENED TO HITLER, WAS SEVERELY CRITICIZED FOR HAVING "ABUSED" HIS POSITION AS OUTGOING PRESIDENT OF THE MOVEMENT TO RAISE THE SAHARA QUESTION. THE SEMI-OFFICIAL ARABIC LANGUAGE AL ANBAA, USUALLY CONTROVERSY-FREE, REPEATEDLY ATTACKED ALGERIA EDITORIALY FOR ALLEGEDLY "PREPARING MILITARY OPERATIONS" AGAINST MOROCCO, AND ACCUSED ALGERIAN RULERS OF BEHAVING AS "MAD DOGS." SEMI-OFFICIAL LE MATIN CALLED ALGERIA AND ITS "SATELLITES" A GROUP OF "BASTARDS, NOT ONLY ISOLATED BUT CONFUSED" AS A RESULT OF THE NAC "DEFEATS." THESE DEFEATS, LE MATIN CONTINUED, WOULD SERVE TO STRENGTHEN THE REGIME'S "OPPOSITION MOVEMENT BOTH ON THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR OF ALGERIA."

5. FRIENDLIES. THE GOOD GUYS OF THE CONFERENCE WERE TITO, FOR HIS SPEECH WHICH DISCOURAGED NAC DISCUSSION OF "BILATERAL" CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTIONS, AS WELL AS INDIA AND EGYPT AND IVORY COAST FOR STICKING TO "TRUE NON-ALIGNED PRINCIPLES." EVEN LIBYAN AND CUBAN SILENCE ON THE SAHARA WAS RECEIVED WITH CAUTIOUS APPROVAL. IT APPEARED THAT THE SAUDIS, SENEGAL, SYRIA, AND ZAIRE WERE PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN DEFENSE OF THE MOROCCAN CAUSE. THE SAUDIS WERE THE AUTHORS OF AN EARLY "PRO-MOROCCAN" RESOLUTION, WHICH THE LOCAL PRESS CLAIMED WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF 27 COUNTRIES, AS OPPOSED TO ONLY 21 THE THE "PRO-ALGERIAN" BENIN RESOLUTION.

BOTH OF THE PROPOSALS EVENTUALLY GAVE WAY TO THE COMPROMISE PARAGRAPH IN THE SUMMIT'S POLITICAL DECLARATION, WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED BY IVORY COAST.

6. GOM DEBATING POINTS. IN THE MANY DEBATES, MOROCCAN DELGATES DRAGGED OUT ALL OF THEIR VERBAL ARMORY TO SELL THE GOM'S BASIC POSITION THAT THE DISPUTE WAS A BILATERAL ONE AND THUS INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE NAC, HAVING BEEN ALREADY SEIZED BY THE ARAB LEAGUE. OPPOSITION LEADERS BOUABID AND BOUCETTA SPOKE OFTEN, AND ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION RAISED THE QUESTION OF MOROCCAN CLAIMS ON ALGERIAN "SAHARAN" TERRITORIES. THE PLIGHT OF THE SAHARAN REFUGEES IN TINDOUF WAS ALSO FREQUENTLY INVOKED. (ON THIS LAST POINT, AL ANBAA ON AUGUST 19 ACCUSED THE ALGERIANS OF PLANNING TO EXPLOIT THOSE REFUGEES TO WORK IN THE GARA DJEBILET IRON MINES. AL ANBAA CALLED UPON MOROCCANS TO WORK TO "LIBERATE" THEIR SAHARAN BROTHERS IN TINDOUF.)

7. GOM DIPLOMACY. THE GOM PULLED OUT ALL STOPS AT COLOMBO, ENDING UP WITH A DELEGATION OF OVER 50, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS HERE. THE INCLUSION OF POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS, ESPECIALLY BOUABID AND BOUCETTA, PROBABLY GREATLY ADDED TO THE GOM DELEGATION'S DEBATING ASSETS IN THE MANY HEATED COMMITTEE SESSIONS. PRIMIN OSMAN ALSO CARRIED OUT A ROUND OF HIGH LEVEL CONSULTATIONS WHICH FONMIN LARAKI'S RANK WOULD HAVE MADE MORE DIFFICULT, AND INDIRA GANDHI REPORTEDLY HOSTED A MEAL IN HIS HONOR.

8. WHAT NOW? WITH THE BALL BACK IN THE OAU'S COURT, THE GOM'S NEXT MOVES ARE UNCLEAR. MOROCCAN STALLING TACTICS PRIOR TO THE UNGA ON THE OAU SUMMIT WOULD APPEAR LIKELY. L'OPINION'S (ISTIQLAL) CORRESPONDENT FROM COLOMBO WARNED ON AUGUST 20 THAT THE UNGA WAS AROUND THE CORNER NOW, AND THAT SECYGEN WALDHEIM'S REPORT WAS LIKELY TO CAUSE MOROCCO DIFFICULTY UNLESS WALDHEIM "DREW THE LESSON OF COLOMBO" AND BECAME "TRULY CONFIDENTIAL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NONALIGNED NATIONS MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976RABAT04535
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760320-1323
From: RABAT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760831/aaaabawi.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 RABAT 4333, 76 RABAT 4431
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <07 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA AT THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED MEETING
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, MO, SS, AG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006